

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 CAPE T 01073 271541Z  
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
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MCT-01 /091 W

-----006774 271543Z /50

O R 271447Z MAY 78 ZFF-4  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7365  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA NIACT IMMEDIATE  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM  
AMEMBASSY GABORONE  
AMEMBASSY LAGOS  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA  
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA  
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 1073

PRETORIA FOR AMB EDMONDSON FROM NELSON

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PDEV, SF, WA  
SUBJ: NAMIBIA; SAG REACTION TO MCHENRY VISIT

1. FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION, THE SAG IS ORCHESTRATING AN  
INTENSELY NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO THE VISIT OF AMB MCHENRY TO  
SOUTH AFRICA AND NAMIBIA. GOVT AND PRO-SAG MEDIA HAVE DEPICTED  
THE VISIT AS A PROVOCATION AND A FAILURE. THIS WAS THE  
THEME OF A SABC-TV COMMENTARY LAST NIGHT, MAY 26, WHICH ALLEGED  
THAT THE VISIT HAD CREATED A TENSE SITUATION.

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PAGE 02 CAPE T 01073 271541Z

2. FOREIGN MINISTER BOTHA WAS ALSO INTERVIEWED ON SABC-TV  
LAST NIGHT ON THE SUBJECT OF THE VISIT. BOTHA AGAIN LASHED  
INTO MCHENRY'S PASSING REFERENCE IN A PRESS INTERVIEW TO THE SAG'S  
ILLEGAL STATUS IN NAMIBIA, ASSERTING THAT THIS STATEMENT COULD  
NOT BE TOLERATED. BOTHA SAID THAT MCHENRY HAD NO ANSWER TO  
THE FACT THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAD ACCEPTED THE WESTERN PROPOSALS  
AND THAT SWAPO SUBSEQUENTLY DECLARED IT WOULD STEP UP VIOLENCE.

3. BOTHA CONTINUED HIS COMMENT IN AN INTERVIEW WITH DIE BURGER TODAY, MAY 27, IN WHICH HE CRITICIZED MCHENRY AND ACCUSED HIM OF "CHALLENGING SOUTH AFRICA" AT THIS "DELICATE STAGE." BOTHA REPORTEDLY SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT MCHENRY'S MOTIVES WERE BUT HE COULD NOT BELIEVE THE WESTERN FIVE SUPPORTED HIS ACTIONS.

4. DEFENSE MINISTER P.W. BOTHA DOMINATED THE FRONT PAGES TODAY WITH A SPEECH GIVEN LAST NIGHT IN WHICH HE WARNED THAT IF IT BECAME NECESSARY, SOUTH AFRICA WOULD REPEAT THE RAID INTO ANGOLA. P.W. DID NOT REFER TO MCHENRY BUT SAID THAT ACCORDING TO NEWS REPORTS, SOUTH AFRICA WAS BEING WARNED BY THE WEST NOT TO REPEAT ITS RAID. HE REITERATED THAT DOUBLE STANDARDS WERE BEING APPLIED TO SOUTH AFRICA, DRAWING A PARALLEL WITH WORLD REACTION TO THE RECENT FRENCH AND BELGIAN MILITARY ACTION IN ZAIRE.

5. COMMENT: MERCURIAL SAG REACTION TO MCHENRY'S VISIT, WHILE NOT UNUSUAL, HAS PERHAPS BEEN SOMEWHAT MORE INTENSE THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN ANTICIPATED. WHEN UNDER CTITICISM, EITHER DIRECT OR IMPLIED, THE AFRIKANER INSTINCT IS TO COUNTER-PUNCH AS HARD AS POSSIBLE. THE REACTION ALSO HAS THE APPEARANCE OF BEING INTENDED TO TRY TO DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN THE US AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CONTACT GROUP. VORSTER'S REMARKS ABOUT MCHENRY TO THE CAPE TOWN FIVE (CAPE TOWN 1047) MAY WELL HAVE BEEN  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 CAPE T 01073 271541Z

INTENDED TO HAVE THIS EFFECT. BY PORTRAYING VORSTER AS HIGHLY PROVOKED (USUN 2163), THE SAG POSSIBLY HOPES TO GAIN SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE IN THE PRESENT SITUATION.

6. THE VISIT WAS PRODUCTIVE IN A NUMBER OF WAYS. NOT ONLY WAS MCHENRY ABLE TO BRING THE VARIOUS GROUPS IN NAMIBIA UP TO DATE BUT ALSO TO FIRM UP SUPPORT FOR THE WESTERN INITIATIVE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF FURTHER UNILATERAL MOVES BY THE SAG. HIS FRANK BUT FRIENDLY DISCUSSION WITH THE ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL WILL HOPEFULLY HAVE SOME IMPACT ON STEYN'S OUTLOOK AND FUTURE ACTIONS. THE MAIN POINTS WHICH MCHENRY WISHED TO CONVEY WERE WIDELY COVERED AND FAVORABLY ELABORATED ON IN THE ENGLISH PRESS. WITHOUGH NECESSARILY ALTERING VIEWS IN SOME INSTANCES ABOUT THE WISDOM OF THE CASSINGA ACTION, WE BELIEVE MCHENRY BROUGHT A WIDE SPECTRUM OF JOURNALISTS, AS WELL AS A NUMBER OF NATIONALIST AND OPPOSITION MP'S WHOM HE MET PRIVATELY, TO A CLEARER REALIZATION OF THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE AND THE NEED TO REBUILD CONFIDENCE. SOME OF THOSE IN THE CABINET WHO WERE UNEASY ABOUT THE SCALE AND TIMING OF THE MAY 4 RAID MAY WELL HAVE FOUND MCHENRY'S VISIT WELCOME. THERE IS REASON TO EXPECT, DESPITE THE SAG'S PUBLIC POSTURING, THAT THE SAG WILL BE MORE PRUDENT

AND THOUGHTFUL IN CONSIDERING NEXT STEPS.

7. THE SAG SENSES AN UNEASINESS AMONG SOME OF THE CONTACT GROUP MEMBERS -- AN UNEASINESS REFLECTED HERE -- ABOUT AMB MCHENRY'S VISIT. IN THIS CIRCUMSTANCE, IT IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS -- BOTH THE LEADERSHIP AND THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL -- BE LEFT IN NO DOUBT THAT THE FIVE ARE IN FIRM AGREEMENT WITH MCHENRY'S MESSAGE ON THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE DONE BY CASSINGA AND THE URGENT NEED ON THE PART OF ALL CONCERNED, ESPECIALLY THE SOUTH AFRICANS, TO ACT NOW TO REBUILD CONFIDENCE AND TRUST.

EDMONDSON

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## Message Attributes

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